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Advertising's Image - U.S. and Yugoslavia

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#56

College of Commerce and Business Administration
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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May 25, 1972

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*Paper to be presented at the Second Annual Conference, American Academy of Advertising, University of Oklahoma, April 13-15, 1972.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

CHICAGO, ILL., MAY 1, 1919

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLISHED WEEKLY
CHICAGO, ILL., MAY 1, 1919
Vol. 27, No. 18

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ADVERTISING'S IMAGE-U. S. AND YUGOSLAVIA

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With the advent of multinational corporations and the consequent emphasis on the world as the potential market place, cross-cultural studies in consumer behavior are becoming more relevant and necessary. One of the major and well-known institutions which cuts across cultures is advertising; it is not only essential to marketing of products and services but, at the same time, people's attitudes toward advertising vary considerably both within, and probably even more, between cultures. The purpose of this study was to assess comparative differences and similarities between U.S. and Yugoslavia in their attitudes toward advertising as an institution.

Replication of Bauer-Greyser Study in Yugoslavia

Bauer and Greyser (1968) conducted an excellent nationwide study in the U.S. to examine public attitudes toward advertising and advertisements. There were four major areas covered in their research (p.11).

1. The salience of advertising to the public compared with other selected aspects of American life;
2. The Public's view of advertising as an institution of our society in terms of both their overall attitudes regarding advertising

and thus reactions to its economic, social and content aspects;

3. How consumers react to advertisements: favorably, unfavorably or neither;

4. Why consumers react to advertisements the way they do.

Based on a national representative sample of 1846 respondents, Bauer and Greyser (1968, p. 331) found that (1) advertising as an institution is of low salience relative to at least some other comparable issues, and (2) opinions toward advertising and advertisements are preponderantly favorable (41 percent favorable vs. 14 percent unfavorable) even though a considerable segment of the population had mixed (34 percent) or indifferent opinions (8 percent).

Yugoslavia¹ provided an excellent opportunity to replicate Bauer-Greyser study and to assess differences in the advertising's image between the two countries. First, Yugoslavia is one of the few East European countries which has allowed not only trading with the western world but also encouraged private foreign investment in the country. As such, it is in the excellent position of bridging the gap between East-West trade and investment arrangements. Its strategic role as the opinion leader in this regard motivated us to conduct the study there. Second, Yugoslavia allows advertising and promotion of branded products on virtually all the mass media including television and radio. In this respect, advertising as an institution is more pervasive in Yugoslavia than most of the Scandinavian countries, for example. As such, we felt that there was a considerable degree of similarity between the U.S. and Yugoslavia in terms of marketing and advertising activities although the intensity is, of course, different.

Finally, Yugoslavia as a communist nation represents significantly different social, economic and political values compared to the U.S. despite Tito's break away from the Soviet bloc since 1948. In particular, Yugoslavia is radically different with respect to social ownership (ownership by employment) and self-management (management by workers).

Based on the differences in social and economic values, we had hypothesized that advertising as an institution will have much lower salience among Yugoslavians, and contrary to the U.S. study, we should expect more unfavorable comments about its role in a modern society. If the hypothesis is true, a number of direct implications follow with respect to transferability of advertising both in terms of magnitude and content.

Adjustments Necessary to Replicate Study

Although we intended to replicate the Bauer-Greyser Study to ensure comparable socioeconomic-demographic characteristics, it was obvious at the outset that some classification questions would have to be eliminated and some others would be modified to accommodate cross-cultural differences. First, we discarded gathering information on family income. In the social conditions currently prevailing in Yugoslavia, it was considered that such a question might be regarded too personal and consequently jeopardize any cooperation from the respondent. Similarly, the question related to racial and ethnic background was discarded as unnecessary given the homogeneity of people in Yugoslavia. Third, we had to interview more male respondents than female respondents because of higher degree of paternal society prevailing in Yugoslavia. In fact, it seemed difficult to interview the female alone in households when the adult male was also present. This has resulted in

much less female composition in total sample compared to the Bauer-Greyser Study. Fourth, classification based on the chief wage earner's occupation also presented some problems and consequent modifications. The category "proprietor, official" seemed inappropriate in view of the fact that all workers are collectively owners of the organization. We have, therefore, limited this category to include only those respondents who own and operate small commercial enterprises. According to the Yugoslav law, small private businesses can be owned and operated by private individuals so long as the number of employees does not exceed five. There was also some confusion in differentiating professional, official and clerical groups due to the system of self-management. However, we attempted to obtain comparable distributions in these categories based on the respondent's job descriptions.

Table 1 presents a comparison of the respondent characteristics between the two studies. As can be seen, there are still some differences between the two samples. First, the Yugoslav sample is understandably much smaller; furthermore, it was obtained from people living in and near Belgrade area. This was strictly due to financial limitations present in our study. Second, we have a disproportionately larger representation of people who have completed college education. This is partly due to limiting our sample from the Belgrade area and partly due to the fact that college students were trained as the interviewers. Finally, there are more retired people than people of 65 years or above age. This is due to the retirement policy in Yugoslavia. A male can retire with full benefits either after serving for 35 years or at the age of 65, and a female can similarly retire after serving for 30 years or at the age of 60. Another explanation is that the

Table 1

Socioeconomic-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	U.S. Sample (n=1846)	Yugoslav Sample (n=300)
	percentage of sample	
Sex:		
Male	41%	60%
Female	59	40
Chief Wage Earner's Occupation:		
Professional, semiprofessional	12	25
Proprietor, Official, Manager	13	13
Clerical, Sales	17	21
Craftsman Foreman, non farm labor	39	23
Retired	14	18
Others	5	--
Respondent's Education:		
Grade School or less	18	22
Some High School	19	11
Graduated High School	34	22
Some College	18	18
College Graduate and higher	11	27
Respondent's Age:		
18-24 years of age	9	15
25-34	21	20
35-49	33	29
50-64	23	23
65 years and above	14	13

length of service in certain types of work is given accelerated retirement such as those serving in active duty during World War II.

In general, we can see that the Yugoslav sample was somewhat more skewed toward upper socioeconomic strata. However, in view of the fact that the Bauer-Greyser Study found no significant differences among various segments of respondents in their attitudes toward advertising, we feel confident that the two studies are comparable.

Similar to the above adjustments necessitated with respect to sample size and questions, we had to adjust several questions. In addition to choosing those sample advertisements with which Yugoslavs were familiar, we had to adjust questions related to other social and economic institutions. For example, we had to discard religion, Federal Government, labor unions and big business as comparative institutions. In their place, we have used city transportation, housing, television and movies. Due to time constraints, we also interviewed the respondent only once and both parts of the Bauer-Greyser Study questionnaire were administered during this interview. No counting period and no follow-up interviewing were, therefore, followed. We believe, however, these adjustments in questionnaire content and procedure were not serious enough to make the two studies incomparable.

Comparison of Findings in the Two Studies

The results reported in this paper are limited to advertising's image in Yugoslavia, and therefore, are based on the first part of the questionnaire. Advertising's image was assessed in four different ways following the Bauer-Greyser Study.

The first method was to assess top-of-the-mind salience, if any, advertising may have among respondents as a social or economic system. The respondents were asked in the broadest possible ways to mention four or five things that annoyed them. It was assumed that if advertising was considered an annoyance or irritant, it would show up in this unaided response. Surprisingly, not a single respondent mentioned advertising or any activity directly related to advertising. In fact, if we generalize to the total selling function, only a handful of respondents expressed annoyance at the unkind treatment of sales clerks in the shopping stores. The biggest areas of annoyance which were salient to the respondents were (1) city transportation (2) high cost of living and (3) laziness and shiftlessness among others.

In contrast, the U.S. Study found that 21 percent of the respondents expressed annoyance at the selling function and almost 10 percent explicitly stated advertising as the source of annoyance. Although both the studies clearly indicate that people are more concerned with their personal problems, the specific aspects are very different in the two studies. For example, in the U.S. Study, it was the inconsiderateness of others that bothered people whereas in the Yugoslav study, it was other people's laziness. Cost of living seems to be much more of a problem to the Yugoslav as compared to the American Citizen. Finally, annoyances from government and public agencies is considerably greater among Americans than among Yugoslavs.² Table 2 gives broad classification of these top-of-the-mind responses in percentages. With respect to advertising, it is obvious that it is a low salience issue in general among Americans but it is virtually nonexistent among the Yugoslavs.

Table 2

Top-of-the-Mind Sources of Annoyance

(Percentage of Respondents Reporting)

<u>U.S. Study</u>		<u>Yugoslav Study</u>	
1. Personal Annoyances:		1. Personal Annoyances:	
Inconsiderateness	22	High Cost of Living	32
Noise	13	Laziness (of others)	28
others	28		
2. The Selling Function:		2. The Selling Function -	
Television and Radio Commercials	8		
High Pressure Sales People	6		
Others	6		
3. Other Business Annoyances	8	3. Other Business Annoyances -	
4. Government - Public Agencies	16	4. Government - Public Agencies City Transportation	34
5. Nothing	19	5. Nothing	21
6. Other	36	6. Other*	25
7. Don't know	<u>4</u>		<u> </u>
Grand Total	167%		140%

* This includes answers such as:
noise, housing problems, lack of
politeness, thefts, war, cleanliness
of city, cheating, dishonesty, unkind
sales clerks, unemployment, poverty
and primitivism.

The second way to measure advertising's image was to obtain its relative salience compared to several other topics. The respondents were asked to rate these topics (including advertising) in five ways: which three or four things in the list of topics do they and their friends:

1. Talk about most
2. Talk about least
3. Have the strongest opinions about
4. Enjoy complaining about but not really seriously; and
5. Think most need immediate attention and change.

It will be recalled that the list of topics was considerably modified when we attempted to replicate the U. S. Study. It is possible that the items we chose to include may produce some bias in the relative salience of advertising, although we see no plausible reason for this. The results of the two studies are shown in Table 3. Advertising is the least talked about topic in both the U. S. and the Yugoslav Studies; however, there are two distinct differences even in this otherwise similar finding. First, the percentage of respondents mentioning advertising is almost one-third in Yugoslav Study of that found in the U. S. Study. Secondly, while labor unions and big business have also comparable low salience in the U. S. Study, there is no other topic which has similar low salience in the Yugoslav Study. Therefore, the relative salience of advertising in the Yugoslav Study is considerably less than that found in the U. S. Study. This is further confirmed if we examine the rank-orderings of topics in terms of least talking about them. It is ranked first in the Yugoslav Study in contrast to the third ranking in the U. S. Study. Once again, we see that advertising stands out as the least discussed and talked about subject in Yugoslavia but has comparable salient topics in "professional sports" and "big business"

Table 3

Relative Salience of Advertising Measured by Amount of Talking

(Percentage of Respondents Reporting)

Topics	Talk About Most		Talk About Least	
	U.S.	Yugoslavia	U.S.	Yugoslavia
Bringing up Children	58	47	11	25
Family Life	49	41	9	18
Religion	47	--	21	--
Public Education	41	48	9	25
The Federal Government	36	--	16	--
Clothing & Fashion	35	43	32	31
Professional Sports	33	40	38	37
Labor Unions	18	--	54	--
Big Business	13	--	44	--
<u>Advertising</u>	11(10th)	4(10th)	40(3rd)	60(1st)
City Transportation	--	44	--	21
Housing	--	43	--	22
Television	--	40	--	29
Movies	--	48	--	37
Total mentions	339%	398%	271%	305%

in the U. S. Study.

A similar picture emerges when we examine relative salience of advertising with respect to seriousness of opinions and attitudes. In Table 4, we show the percentage of respondents who expressed strongest opinions, who had no serious complaints, and who felt immediate change was needed with respect to each of the ten topics chosen in the study. It is obvious from the findings that very small percentage of people have strong opinions about advertising in both Yugoslavia and U. S. Furthermore, even a smaller percentage (5 percent vs. 6 percent) feels that immediate attention and change are needed in Yugoslav advertising. This percentage is, however, considerably higher (15 percent vs. 5 percent) in the U. S. sample. Finally, many more Yugoslavs complain about advertising but are not serious compared to the Americans (50 percent vs. 20 percent) which is a surprising finding.

The minority of respondents who felt that immediate attention and change were needed in advertising were asked: "What do you think should be done about advertising?" Their open end answers were categorized and are shown in Table 5. Although it is difficult to put faith in responses from only 17 respondents in the Yugoslav Study, we are surprised to see that there is a considerable degree of similarity in the recommendations provided by respondents in the two studies; the advertisements are perceived to be dull, childish, exaggerated and in bad taste, all of which should be immediately changed.

Based on the findings presented in Tables 2 through 5, we can safely state that salience of advertising as a mode of mass communications is much lower

Table 4

Seriousness of Opinions and Attitudes

Topics	Have Strongest Opinions		Complain about but not serious		Needs immediate change	
	U.S.	Yugoslavia	U.S.	Yugoslavia	U.S.	Yugoslavia
Religion	52	--	6	--	10	--
Bringing up children	43	46	12	16	20	31
Family life	35	41	14	26	12	25
Public Education	33	38	14	17	41	33
The Federal Government	32	--	33	--	28	--
Labor Unions	18	--	17	--	26	--
Clothing & Fashions	12	37	23	46	6	28
Professional Sports	11	35	11	54	5	36
Big Business	8	--	16	--	11	--
Advertising	7(10th)	6(10th)	20(3rd)	50(2nd)	15(5th)	5(10th)
City transportation	--	35	--	46	--	28
Housing	--	42	--	13	--	47
Television	--	31	--	46	--	31
Movies	--	<u>27</u>	--	<u>45</u>	--	<u>22</u>
Total Mentions	246%	338%	145%	345%	157%	300%

Table 5

What do you think should be done about advertising

<u>U.S. Study</u> (n=299)		<u>Yugoslavia Study</u> (n=17)	
1. Criticism of radio or television	35%	1. Advertising should be made more interesting	40%
2. Advertising should be more truthful	35%	2. Should be more truthful	34%
3. Less advertising	27%	3. Should be understandable	17%
4. Less stress on sex, better taste in advertising	11%	4. Bad taste should be removed	13%
5. Should be on a more adult level	10%	5. No answer	17%
6. Should be more realistic	10%	Total responses (excluding no answers)	104%
7. Dangerous or harmful products should not be advertised	10%		
8. Other answers	36%		
Total Responses	174%		

in Yugoslavia than what was found in the U. S. The only surprising finding is that 50 percent of the Yugoslav respondents stated that they complain about advertising but are not serious.

The fourth area covered in the study to assess advertising's image was a direct overall attitude toward advertising. The respondents were asked: "How do you feel about advertising?" On the basis of their answers to the question, respondents were classified as favorable, mixed, unfavorable or indifferent toward advertising. Table 6 provides the tabulations from both the studies. As we had predicted, favorable attitude toward advertising is considerably less in Yugoslavia than in the U. S. (11 percent vs. 41 percent). Secondly, there are no differences between the two cultures in regard to unfavorable or mixed reactions. The bulk of Yugoslav respondents expressed an indifferent attitude as opposed to polarized attitudes found in the U. S. Study. This is probably an additional confirmation that advertising as an institution is of very low salience either as an entity of annoyance or as an entity of pleasure.

The respondents were also asked to think about reasons why some people like advertising and others don't like it. Tables 7 and 8 provide tabulations relevant to these questions. While the Yugoslav respondents are split between advertising's role as informative - educational and entertaining, the U. S. respondents primarily consider it to be informative, useful and educational. More surprisingly, many respondents in the Yugoslav Study were unable to think as to why people would like advertising (30 percent vs. 12 percent).

The reasons for people's disliking of advertising are also different between the two studies. The single most reason in the U. S. is the intrusiveness of advertising in terms of frequency, saturation and program interruptions.

Table 6

Overall Attitude Toward Advertising

	<u>U. S. Study</u>	<u>Yugoslavia Study</u>
Favorable	41%	11%
Mixed	34%	31%
Unfavorable	14%	15%
Indifferent	8%	38%
No answer or unclassifiable	3%	5%
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	(n=1846)	(n=300)

Table 7

Reasons why people like advertising

	<u>U. S. Study</u>	<u>Yugoslavia Study</u>
1. Information - related reasons	57%	26%
a. Informative, educational	35%	18%
b. Information on new products	17%	---
c. Information on price	5%	8%
2. Invidious reasons for liking advertising	22%	---
3. Entertainment - related reasons	13%	21%
a. Advertising is enjoyable, humorous and sometimes interesting	9%	21%
b. Advertising pays for entertainment	4%	---
4. No specific reason	4%	10%
5. Miscellaneous reasons	11%	---
6. No opinion; don't know	12%	30%
Total Responses	<u>119%</u>	<u>87%</u>

Table 8

Reasons why people don't like advertising

	<u>U. S. Study</u>	<u>Yugoslavia Study</u>
1. Advertising's intrusiveness	40%	---
2. Untruthful or exaggerated	26%	12%
3. Silly, insults people's intelligence	11%	9%
4. Offensive or bad for children	8%	12%
5. High-pressure selling	6%	---
6. Advertising increases prices	3%	5%
7. It is boring	---	13%
8. People not interested in advertising	---	17%
9. Good products don't need advertising	---	4%
10. Don't understand advertisements (sense and purpose)	---	10%
11. Don't know, no opinion	15%	13%
12. Miscellaneous reasons	11%	---
13. No specific reason	<u>9%</u>	<u>---</u>
Total Responses	129%	95%

None of these is found in Yugoslavia because none really exists; advertisements on television and radio are separated from programs similar to the practice in most European Countries, and the saturation is not anywhere near what we have in the U. S. Similarly, the exaggerated and untruthful advertising is much less frequently cited in Yugoslavia than in the U. S. (12 percent vs. 26 percent). Perhaps the single factor for not liking advertising in Yugoslavia is the image that it is unnecessary, lacks purpose and consequently becomes boring for people.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the above data analyses and findings we can draw the following conclusions:

1. In Yugoslavia, advertising is not a salient issue. Very few people consciously think of advertising and its positive or negative image in their minds. Yugoslav respondents are much more concerned about high cost of living, city transportation system and laziness prevalent among others. In contrast, the U. S. respondents have a low salience toward advertising; a small percentage of people are conscious about its annoying characteristics. However, they also find other issues more salient such as inconsiderateness of others, noise, and government and its policies. Surprisingly, there is a much greater homogeneity of salience of specific issues among Yugoslav respondents than among the U. S. respondents which can be inferred from the percentages given to a single issue.
2. Even relative to ten specific topics, advertising is found to be not a salient topic among Yugoslav respondents. All other topics

are much more frequently mentioned about whom they talk most. Although a similar finding emerges in the U. S. Study, at least two other topics are of equal low salience to the respondents (big business and labor unions). Reciprocally, advertising is the least talked about topic in Yugoslavia whereas it ranks third in the U. S. Study.

3. In both the studies, very few have strong opinions on advertising. However, considerably more respondents expressed the need for immediate change in advertising in the U. S. Sample than in the Yugoslav sample. Surprisingly, half of the Yugoslav respondents stated that they do complain about advertising but are not serious about their gripes.
4. As expected, more respondents are indifferent toward advertising in Yugoslavia whereas more respondents are favorably predisposed toward advertising in the U. S.
5. Entertainment is a big factor in liking advertisements among Yugoslav respondents whereas Americans like it primarily as a source of information and education. Similarly, Americans don't like advertising because of its intrusiveness in individual's daily life but Yugoslavs don't like it because it is unnecessary and lacks purpose.

The above conclusions suggest that most of the differences between the U. S. and Yugoslav studies are likely due to greater intensity, variety and exaggeration of advertisements typically experienced in the U. S. Perhaps it has reached a point of becoming a salient irritant at least among a minority of consumers in the U. S. This does not seem to be the case in

Yugoslavia as yet.

A second implication we see from the study is the immediate need to improve the creative aspect of advertising in Yugoslavia. Many respondents are unable to comprehend the purpose of the advertisements, and therefore, unable to relate the ad to the product. Our personal experience bears this out; although there are some very creative advertisements, most seem to be rather primitive and typical of what one finds in underdeveloped economies.

FOOTNOTES

1. It is probably incorrect to state that our study represents advertising's image in Yugoslavia because all the respondents we interviewed lived in or near Belgrade. We know, therefore, that rural area of Yugoslavia is not at all represented. However, it is also likely that the rural dweller may not have exposure to advertising particularly on broadcast media and, therefore, may not have opinions about advertising. This is very common in most other countries where markets for branded packaged goods are primarily in the metropolitan areas. One additional consolation we receive is from the fact that the Bauer-Greyser Study found no differences among various socioeconomic - demographic segments of the population.
2. We are aware that people in Yugoslavia may be unwilling to express their annoyance toward the government and its agencies due to the political structure of that country.

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